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TAGS: PREL IR MU

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES IRAN WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) The Ambassador met with Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmud al-Sa' id on October 2 to discuss regional and bilateral issues. In addition to touching on the Middle East Peace Process, the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement, and Omani economic and social development progress, Sayyid Fahd focused on the Iranian nuclear issue. Drawing from his 25 years of government experience in dealing with Iran (beginning with a one year stint as Foreign Minister from 1971-72), Sayyid Fahd described Tehran as a "tough negotiator." He stated that the Iranian regime was adept at mobilizing public support for key government policies - as it had recently done regarding Iran's "right" to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes - but that this made it very difficult for Iranian officials to later "back down" during talks with the international community.

¶2. (C) Sayyid Fahd emphasized that Iran had historically not responded well to threats, harsh rhetoric or heavy-handed pressure. Rather than produce a change in behavior, such tactics instead were likely to harden defensive attitudes in Tehran. Sayyid Fahd regretted that the West had not been able to talk with Iran on its nuclear program while former Iran President Mohammed Khatemi was in office. Khatemi, he continued, had told Oman that he was committed to ensuring that Iranian nuclear research was limited to non-military applications.

¶3. (C) Sayyid Fahd commented that shortly after the Iranian revolution, the clerical regime in Tehran had tried to "incite" the Shiite community in Oman. (Note: While no official statistics exist, the Shia population of Oman is estimated at less than 5% of the population. End Note.) Iran was unsuccessful in this attempt, however, as Shiites in Oman - both then and now - are well integrated into Omani society and hold no allegiance or loyalty to Tehran.  
GRAPPO